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C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000512

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FOR NEA/I-PM AND EAP/ANP

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [IZ](#) [TN](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS - TONGA

REF: STATE 150164

Classified By: Ambassador Larry M. Dinger per 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Responding to reftel queries, Embassy Suva's view is that, under current circumstances in Tonga, by far the easiest mechanism to retain the Tonga Defense Service (TDS) as part of MNFI is through reftel scenario four - Tonga

commits forces under U.S. command. This is essentially the means by which Tonga contributed troops in 2004 and has again in 2007. Following are our preliminary answers to the questions raised in reftel, paragraphs 3 and 4:

--Which scenario will require only an executive decision?

Under scenario four, the procedure essentially used in 2004 and 2007, the TDS military deployments to MNFI have only required Defense Board approval. The Defense Board includes the King, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, and the Commander TDS.

--Which will require legislative approval or ratification?

Without consulting Tonga attorneys, we cannot judge if any of scenarios one through three would require legislative ratification. If legislative ratification would be required, under the current Tonga political system the King's view rules. He, via his Cabinet and representatives of the Tonga Nobles, can override any objections within the Parliament. Reform to a more democratic system is taking place, though major changes to reduce the King's power and dramatically increase the power of elected MPs now appear delayed until ¶2010.

--Are you aware of similar actions taken by Tonga, or are there scenarios which would be novel?

Scenario four would not be novel; all others would be. Tonga was among the first countries to join MNFI - it decided to commit troops to Iraq before UNSCR 1546. When UNSCR 1546 was agreed in June 2004, Tonga's contingent was already training in Kuwait for entry to Iraq.

--What is the estimated time frame?

Under scenario four, a deployment currently could be approved by the Defense Board in as few as two months. The 2007

deployment took much longer, in part because the Prime Minister was concerned about public perceptions and in part because of domestic political developments (death of the late King; a convulsive political riot). Presuming Tonga's political reforms continue, government sensitivities to the public mood will only increase.

--Are you confident in these assessments, or would you need to engage Foreign Ministry lawyers in order to give an authoritative answer?

We are confident about our legal assessment of scenario four under Tonga's government as it currently exists. Per above, we cannot judge the other scenarios, and we reiterate that political reforms now under way appear destined to alter the power structure. Those reforms could certainly change the dynamic of the Defense Board, affecting even scenario four.

-- Concerning domestic politics, would a UNSCR of some kind be necessary? If so, would it need to authorize military action (Chapter VII) or would a generic (non-Chapter VII) call to support Iraq suffice?

We believe Tonga's participation in MNFI to date has been based much more on the King's role and the Tonga military's strong ties to the U.S. military than to any UNSCRs. Still, a UNSCR, especially a Chapter VII UNSCR, would certainly be helpful. Prior to the current deployment, Tonga's Prime Minister raised serious concerns about sending another contingent to Iraq. His primary concern was political fall-out if there are casualties. The lack of a Chapter VII UNSCR would further reduce the comfort level of Tonga's politicians and could impact Tonga's long-term commitment to MNFI. Also, as noted above, it appears the political reform process will significantly increase the role of elected parliamentarians, reducing our confidence level about future deployments.

12. (C) Finally, the Tonga Government has conveyed a diplomatic note indicating that U.S.-Tonga relations will suffer if the U.S. does not rapidly find a way to provide visa services to Tonga citizens in Tonga. See Suva 435 and State 136893. The Tonga diplomatic note and subsequent conversations made clear that the current six-month TDS deployment to MNFI and a follow-on six-month deployment in 2008 are not affected by the threat, but any subsequent deployment requests would be seriously endangered.

DINGER